

Brussels, 15 July 2010

EU launches negotiations on Association Agreements with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia

The first round of negotiations on an Association Agreement with Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia will take place in the capitals of the three South Caucasus countries in the coming week. The Agreements are based on joint commitments to a set of shared values and will cover a wide range of areas, including Political dialogue, Justice, freedom and security, as well as trade and cooperation in sectoral policies.

Attending the event in Batumi and welcoming the launch of negotiations, the EU's High Representative/Vice President of the Commission Catherine Ashton said: *"Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have shown a clear ambition to intensify their relationships with the EU. I am personally convinced that this comprehensive Association Agreement shall impact positively not just on political relations but also on people's lives, in terms of economic opportunities, easier contacts with people from the EU, the environment, just to name a few. This agreement will be a catalyst to the domestic reforms in these countries and can help us to focus resources on the key institutions needed to make further efforts."*

"These Association Agreements will lay a new legal foundation for our relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The main objective of the Association Agreements is to achieve closer political association and gradual economic integration between the EU and these countries", stated Commissioner Füle on the occasion.

The EU is launching the negotiations through first Plenary Meetings to be held in Batumi (Georgia), on 15 July, in Baku (Azerbaijan) on 16 July and in Yerevan (Armenia) on 19 July. The negotiating process will be guided by the principles of inclusiveness, differentiation, conditionality and joint ownership, as well as by a strong commitment of the parties to shared values and principles, including democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and good governance.

The EU is currently negotiating similar Association Agreements with Ukraine and Moldova.

Background

The European Neighbourhood Policy governs the relations between the EU and its southern and eastern neighbours. In 2009 the EU launched the Eastern Partnership, the Eastern dimension of the ENP framework, aiming at substantially upgrading engagement with the six Eastern neighbours via:

- Bilateral track, whose objectives include the establishing of Association Agreements with Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas, once conditions have been met, as well as progress on visa and mobility issues
- Multilateral track (i.e. intergovernmental platforms and Flagship Initiatives).